



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

301 North Lamar St., Suite 300, Jackson, MS 39201

www.mfc.state.ms.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORESTRY COMMISSION ANNOUNCES FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

Jackson, MS—The Mississippi Forestry Commission is seeking applications for its inaugural Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The FLP was created by Congress to help landowners, state and local governments, and private land trusts identify and protect environmentally important forest lands that are threatened by present and future conversion to non-forest uses through the use of conservation easements and fee purchases.

Mississippi has 19.8 million acres of forestland, and 69 percent of that is owned by private, non-industrial landowners. These forestlands provide wildlife habitat, timber and recreation, protect water quality and have scenic value. “But urban and suburban sprawl and other development are causing fragmentation and conversion of these forests to other land uses,” said Charlie Morgan, State Forester. “Through the Forest Legacy Program, we hope to work with partners and interested landowners by protecting important forested areas that may otherwise be lost to development.”

The Forestry Commission developed a FLP Assessment of Need document that identifies natural forest communities in the state and trends causing conversion of forestland to other uses. The plan defines three priority Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi based on conservation values and population growth, and specifies eligibility criteria for tracts that may be considered for protection through a conservation easement or for purchase. The three Legacy Areas are Northeast FLA (Clay, Itawamba, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, and Tishomingo Counties), Central FLA (Copiah, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, and Simpson Counties), and Southeast FLA (Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone, and Wayne Counties). Priority forest types and important ecological areas are described for each FLA in the Assessment of Need, which is posted on the Forestry Commission’s Web site: www.mfc.state.ms.us.

FLP dollars will help fund the purchase of forestland for protection or acquisition of development rights through a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a government agency or conservation organization that permanently limits land uses in order to protect conservation values. The program requires a 25 percent non-federal cost share.

To qualify for consideration through the Forest Legacy Program, landowners must submit a completed FLP application and all attachments to the Mississippi Forestry Commission on or before 5 p.m. on September 22, 2008. To be considered for nomination as a Forest Legacy Tract for federal fiscal year 2010, forested tracts must be located in one of the three designated Forest Legacy Areas, must meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the Assessment of Need and must be offered by willing sellers for either a conservation easement or for fee simple purchase. "Tracts that we will consider must be important to the public because of their ecological value, threatened by conversion and located strategically near or next to larger blocks of protected lands," said Bruce Frasier, FLP Coordinator for Mississippi. "They really should be great examples of natural forest communities that are in urgent need of protection."

Landowners interested in applying for the Forest Legacy Program can learn more by visiting www.mfc.state.ms.us or contacting Mississippi FLP Coordinator Bruce Frasier at (601) 656-1381 or bfrasier@mfc.state.ms.us; or FLP Outreach Coordinator Elizabeth Barber at (601) 957-3443 or liz@barberandmann.com.

Forest Legacy program representatives will be available during information and assistance sessions held from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m. on September 8th at the North Mississippi Experiment Station, 5421 Hwy 145 South in Verona (662-566-2201); September 9th at Gander Mountain, 4501 Hardy Street, Hattiesburg (601-268-6845); and on September 11th at the Southern Regional Fire Training Center, 3139 Hwy 468 West, Pearl (601-420-6000).

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